



# LAND USE SERVICES DEPARTMENT PLANNING STAFF REPORT



HEARING DATE: September 21, 2006

AGENDA ITEM NO: 2

## Project Description

**Applicant:** Land Use Services Department  
**Proposal:** General Plan Update project to include: an update of the County General Plan goals, policies and maps (including associated land use district changes); the establishment of 13 community plans; and a complete revision to Title 8 of the San Bernardino County Code (the Development Code).  
**Index:** CW1-849N  
**CATS:** 00243CQ0  
**Community:** Countywide  
**Location:** Countywide  
**Staff:** Randy Scott

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## Background

### Preparation of Community Plans

A key component of the General Plan Update project is the preparation of 13 community plans. These community plans identify goals and policies which are unique or important to each particular community. When the 1989 General Plan and Development Code were adopted, the community plans which were in effect at that time were simultaneously repealed. Any unique development standards which were identified within the repealed community plans were incorporated into the 1989 Development Code.

The Phase I Scoping of the 2006 General Plan update recommended that the Community Plan program be reinstated to help fulfill the need for development guidance within these 13 communities. Community plans focus on a particular region or community within the overall County General Plan.

To aid County staff and our General Plan update consultants in the re-establishment of community plans, Advisory Committees were established within each Community Plan area. These committees provided invaluable assistance in formulating the community goals and policies and facilitating public input into each plan. Throughout the entire community plan process, 53 different meetings were conducted in preparation of the 13 draft community plans.

As an integral part of the overall Plan, community plans must be consistent with the General Plan. Community plans build upon the goals and policies of each element of the General Plan. Regional policies have been developed within the General Plan, which address policies that are common to each of the three geographic regions (Valley, Mountain and Desert) of the County. Community plan goals have been customized to meet the specific needs or unique circumstances or wishes of individual communities. The goals and policies within community plans guide development in a manner that maintains the existing balance of land uses, preserves the character of the community, and complements existing development. The following are the proposed community plans within the unincorporated areas of the County.

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Action taken by the Planning Commission on this item may be appealed to the Board.  
Note: Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors are not appealable.

Yes ☐ No ☒

- Bear Valley
- Bloomington
- Crest Forest
- Hilltop
- Homestead Valley
- Joshua Tree
- Lake Arrowhead
- Lucerne Valley
- Lytle Creek
- Morongo Valley
- Muscoy
- Oak Glen
- Phelan/Pinon Hills

Each of the community plans within a given geographical region is structured with the same general format, and has many common policies. The policies common to several community plans within a region formed the basis for preparing the Regional Goals and Policies. The Regional Policies also apply to areas outside of specified community plan areas. The format of the community plans mirrors the overall format of the General Plan to provide consistency between each of the documents.

Because the Oak Hills Community Plan was recently adopted by the Board of Supervisors, it will merely be reformatted to be consistent with the other 13 community plans.

### **Mountain Region Community Plans**

The September 21<sup>st</sup> hearing will focus on the six Mountain Region Community Plans. The residents of all six communities share common interests and desires in conserving the natural resources and scenic beauty of their communities and in ensuring that there are no conflicts in the interface between the national forest and adjacent land uses. They want to protect and preserve the alpine mountain character of their communities by maintaining primarily single-family residential development and commercial development that serves the needs of local residents and tourists. They want to promote economic development that generates sustainable revenues whose activities benefit the local people as well as visitors, are compatible with the natural environment and surrounding uses, and support conservation. They also desire to have a balance between community and resort, between the needs of permanent residents and visitors. There is also a keen interest to acknowledge service and infrastructure capacity and limitations of the various areas, particularly roads and water, to serve future development.

Traffic circulation has been one of the major issues of concern of mountain residents during Community Plan preparation. One of the important distinctions that has emerged from analysis of future traffic conditions is that the regional circulation system, i.e. the state highways within the mountains, are not under County jurisdiction. The regional system of state highways provides the key linkages to the valley and desert areas of the County and beyond. The General Plan Update and EIR attempt to clarify jurisdictional control of both land area and infrastructure. One of the outcomes of that distinction is recognition that Caltrans maintains its own Level of Service and highway design standards and that the County's General Plan has no jurisdictional control. The General Plan and EIR point out that the County's Level of Service standards do not apply to the state highways. This disclosure is a new concept that has not been acknowledged previously. The current Level of Service (LOS) standard in the 1989 General Plan is LOS "C", which represents reasonably steady traffic flow with some limitations on movement and speed, and occasional backups on critical approaches (see Attachment 7 for Level of Service definitions). The Mountain Regional LOS standard and the LOS standard for the Community Plans in the General Plan Update have maintained the LOS "C" standard

during the draft plan stage. However, traffic modeling and more in-depth review of future traffic conditions during the preparation of the EIR have revealed that for a few road segments in the mountains, LOS "C" will not be achieved based on the growth forecasts presented in the General Plan Update. Furthermore, an examination of the General Plan Circulation Element for the mountain region contain some roads under County jurisdiction that are rated at a design standard that calls for four-lanes of road width. The analysis performed for the General Plan Update EIR recognizes that due to the terrain limitations and current built conditions, many of these roads are unlikely to be constructed to ultimate Circulation Element design standards due to both monetary costs and environmental costs. The physical environmental consequences of constructing major County roads to four-lane conditions would likely be unacceptable to residents and visitors of the mountains. Based on the recognition of these facts, the EIR includes a recommendation to change the LOS standard in the Mountain Region to Level "D". LOS "D" denotes the level where traffic nears an unstable flow, intersections still function, but short queues develop and cars may have to wait through one cycle during short peaks. This level of service represents more realistic conditions in the Mountain Region and is a compromise in terms of acceptable traffic flows and a balance of projected growth and physical and economic limitations of construction of roads in the mountains.

The following is a list of the six communities plan areas included in the Mountain Region and a brief description of the unique issues which each community plan addresses that are in addition to the common concerns of residents throughout the Mountain Region:

- Bear Valley Community Plan - Key concerns in this community are to provide adequate infrastructure and services, promote economic development that can sustain the mountain community character and maintain a balance between the needs of community residents and tourists. Recent letters regarding the Community Plan are included as Attachment 8.
  - Letters from development interests in Big Bear were submitted recently that express concern with some of the Land Use Policy discussion. One project, known as the Moon Camp development, has been under application review, including an EIR, for the past several years. The developer is concerned that the language in Policy BV/LU 1.1 would prohibit the project from going forward. Another developer is concerned with the same policy as it would be applied to future development in the Baldwin Lake area.

Staff does not believe that the policies as written unilaterally preclude review and approval of these specific projects or any other future projects, for that matter, to the extent that the projects can be found to be consistent with the Community Plan and General Plan following development application processing. The plans are intended to establish clearly defined community objectives for future development of the area and provide guidance to project review to ensure conformance with Community Plan policy. With regards to Policy BV/LU 1.1, the language does not mean that future Land Use Zoning Designations cannot be approved, on the contrary, the intent is that projects will be approved subject to demonstrating consistency with the Community Plan and General Plan. One issue that is unique to the Bear Valley Plan is the carry over of the "holding zone" strategy from the original 1988 Community Plan. That strategy entailed assigning appropriate designations to suitable undeveloped large parcels that existed in the unincorporated portion of Big Bear Valley in 1988. For residentially designated large parcels, a very low density was assigned that prompted a future General Plan Amendment and specific project design that would consider the infrastructure availability, fire safety and other specific project design issues on a case-by-case basis. The current 2006 Community incorporates that same approach as expressed through various land use policies and circulation/infrastructure policies.

However, to better recognize that historical relationship to the 1988 Plan, staff is proposing to add the following language to Section BV 1.2, Community Background. The following text would be added to page 11, immediately preceding Sub-Section BV 1.2.3 (see Attachment 9):

One of the major issues that was addressed in the 1988 Community Plan was that of an adequate water supply and traffic circulation. One of the most significant constraints on future growth and development in Big Bear Valley was identified as the availability of water for potable domestic and fire flow purposes. In order to address this issue several residential land use strategies were incorporated in the Plan. In recognition of several large parcels of undeveloped private property that were suitable for future residential development occurred in the unincorporated portion of the valley, residential land use designations were assigned to these properties, but with very low density of development allowed. Appropriate density of future development was intended to be considered at the time that specific development proposals were submitted. Individual projects would address the availability of adequate water supplies, traffic circulation and other infrastructure to support the individual project's proposed density of development. This concept came to be known as the "Holding Zone" approach. The 2006 Bear Valley Community Plan incorporates this strategy from the 1988 Plan. Current residential land use zoning designations on large parcels with low development densities are reflected in such designations as BV/RL-40 (Rural Living, 40 acre minimum parcel size) and other similar low density designations. Future development proposals will be considered based on a demonstrated ability to provide adequate infrastructure and maintain consistency with the goals and policies of the 2006 Community Plan.

Other minor textual changes to various policies are also included in Attachment 9.

- Crest Forest Community Plan - Key concerns include a desire to maintain low-density residential development, to enhance existing commercial services and facilities to meet the frequently reoccurring needs of residents and visitors of the community, and to expand the recreation opportunities, trails systems, and open space areas located on both public and private lands for residents and visitors.
- Hilltop Community Plan - A key concern include the desire to maintain low-density residential development, and to expand recreation opportunities, trails systems and open space areas located on both public and private lands. Some minor land use zoning district changes are being proposed in the Green Valley Lake area. Certain properties that are currently General Commercial are proposed to be changed back to the residential designation they had prior to the 1985 Community Plan.
- Lake Arrowhead Community Plan - Key issues include a desire to persevere the alpine character of the area by maintaining low-density residential development, and to protect the scenic and natural resources, including Lake Arrowhead, which symbolizes the community character and quality of life of residents and visitors. A letter was received recently from a sub-committee of the Community Plan Advisory Committee. The letter is included in Attachment 8 to the staff report.
  - A letter was submitted by Mr. Wes McDaniel on behalf of the sub-committee requesting that six new policies be added to the Land Use Element relative to new construction

standards and guidelines and three new policies be added to the Conservation Element relative to historic structures.

Staff does not recommend incorporation of any of the six proposed land use policies for the following reasons: five of the land use policies address development and design standards for single family residences, which staff believes extend beyond the intent of the General Plan and Community Plans. These policies attempt to impose design standards that relate to areas within the Arrowhead Woods Tracts that are subject to CC & Rs, has a homeowners association and for which there is an Architectural Review Committee that has legal oversight of single family development. Less than 50% of the plan area is within the Arrowhead Woods Tracts and staff believes that these policies would not be supported by property owners outside of Arrowhead Woods. One of the proposed policies addresses what has come to be known as "mansionization", which is a label for over-building of single family residences by excessive mass, height, maximizing building envelopes, etc. This issue has had some broader level of concern in the mountain communities; however, the preparation of design standards to address this issue would take a focused effort that would best be accomplished as a follow-on implementation action of the General Plan and Development Code Update. The sixth proposed land use policy change includes an increase in the specified tree size as part of the landscape standards for parking areas of commercial and industrial development. Staff does not support this policy as it proposes application retroactively to existing parking areas and that the new landscape standards incorporated in the Updated Development Code provide appropriate standards for the Mountain Region.

Mr. McDaniel's letter also proposes three new policies for the Conservation Element of the Community Plan. Of these, staff recommends incorporation of one policy, LU/CO 5.2 that addresses criteria for historical structures. The other two proposed policies are problematic in that one calls for the County to establish a review body for historical structures and the second attempts to prescribe enforcement procedures for adversely impacting historical structures.

- Lytle Creek Community Plan - A key issue in this community is a willingness to share this unique area with non-residents and to make available to them facilities and services, provided the facilities and services benefit the local people as well as visitors, are compatible with the natural environment and surrounding uses, and support conservation of the natural resources valued by community residents.
- Oak Glen Community Plan - Key issues include preserving the rural character of the community by maintaining agricultural activities, low-density residential development and limited commercial development by balancing the preservation of the rural character while providing for local jobs and businesses through agritourism opportunities.

## **Recommendation**

CONTINUE the hearing on the General Plan Update to October 5, 2006, to consider Community Plans within the Valley Region and the "hotspot" analyses.

## **Attachments**

1. Draft Bear Valley Community Plan (Available electronically at [www.sbcounty.gov/landuseservices](http://www.sbcounty.gov/landuseservices))
2. Draft Crest Forest Community Plan (Available electronically at [www.sbcounty.gov/landuseservices](http://www.sbcounty.gov/landuseservices))

3. Draft Hilltop Community Plan (Available electronically at [www.sbcounty.gov/landuseservices](http://www.sbcounty.gov/landuseservices))
4. Draft Lake Arrowhead Community Plan (Available electronically at [www.sbcounty.gov/landuseservices](http://www.sbcounty.gov/landuseservices))
5. Draft Lytle Creek Community Plan (Available electronically at [www.sbcounty.gov/landuseservices](http://www.sbcounty.gov/landuseservices))
6. Draft Oak Glen Community Plan (Available electronically at [www.sbcounty.gov/landuseservices](http://www.sbcounty.gov/landuseservices))
7. Traffic Level of Service Definitions
8. Written Comments Received Relative to the Mountain Region Community Plans
9. Proposed Changes to the Bear Valley Community Plan
10. Responses to Oral and Written Comments Received at the September 7, 2006 Planning Commission Hearing